JUSTICE LEAGUE®

TASK FORCE™

33 MAR 96

PRIEST

BERNADO

WALLACE

STOP! YOU'LL KILL HIM!

A CENTURY AND A HALF AGO, WHEN GLENN GAMMERON WAS JUST A BOY KILLING TIME IN THE ETHER VALLEYS OF MIRAN, HE DREAMED OF BIG MONEY AND BIG ADVENTURE.

THIS GIG HAS NEITHER.

SURE, 80 THOUSAND CREDITS MAKES NICE POCKET CHANGE-- BUT THIS CASE IS FRAUGHT WITH PITFALLS--

--AND MARTIANS...

WELL, GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE STILL *HERE*. I'D HATE TO HAVE TO *KILL* YOU, AFTER ALL--

--THERE ARE *SO MANY* OTHERS WAITING TO DO THAT--

--DESPERO.

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE LITTLE *RUCKUS* OUTSIDE AND TRY TO ESCAPE.

WHICH WOULD COST *ME* 80 GRAND. I'M *THRILLED* YOU'VE DECIDED *NOT* TO ESCAPE--

--BUT I *KNOW* YOU WERE *THINKING* ABOUT IT.

THAT'S A *REMINDER*. A *REITERATION* OF OUR *RELA-TIONSHIP*.

ZZAAPP

I AM THE THE *BOUNTY HUNTER*, YOU ARE THE *FUGITIVE*.

I TRACKED YOU ALL THE WAY TO EARTH AND BROUGHT YOU *BACK* FOR TRIAL. NOW I'VE HEARD YOUR "*I'M REALLY L-RON*" DE-FENSE, AND, YES, I'M IMPRESSED--

--BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE OUR RELATIONSHIP.

"*L-RON*." "*DESPERO*." WHATEVER. TO ME, YOU'RE A *PAY-CHECK*. THAT MEANS YOU'RE NOT GOING *ANYWHERE*--

--J'ONN!

HEY, MAN-- HOW'S IT GOING--?

WHHAA-A-A

WW!!

KRAA-A-A-A-T-T!!!

'SUP, GAMMERON.

GUESS J'ONN FOUND YOU, Huh?

SHUT UP, RAY.

I'LL TAKE THAT AS A "YES."

L-RON--

--ARE YOU WELL, MY FRIEND--?

SSMASSHH!!

I... AM *FUNCTIONAL.*

YOUR FRIEND *GAMMERON* HAS... UNIQUE... METHODS OF RESTRAINING PRISONERS.

GLENN GAMMERON WAS *NEVER* MY FRIEND--

--ALTHOUGH HE AND I SHARE AN EXTENSIVE HISTORY.

YOUR VIRTUAL REALITY *COMMAND CENTER* HAS SUFFERED EXCES-SIVE DAMAGE--

--AND YOU LOOK TERRIBLE.

IT'S *DESPERO,* J'ONN.

MY *INTELLECT* HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY AT ODDS WITH DESPERO'S *SAVAGE INSTINCT.* IT'S ALMOST *FUNNY*--

--MY BECOMING THE *MONSTER* THEY *ACCUSE* ME OF BEING.

I AM SUBJECT TO FITS OF *RAGE,* EACH NEW ONE *INCREASING* IN *DURATION* AND *FEROCITY.*

EACH EPISODE *DAMAGES* MY CONTROL CENTER A LITTLE MORE. SOON, IT WILL BE *INOPERABLE*--

--AND THE *BEAST* WILL BE *IN CONTROL.*

L-RON, YOU ARE A *SYNTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS* IMPOSED ON DESPERO'S *VACANT MIND.* DESPERO'S BESTIAL INSTINCT SHOULD BE OF *MARGINAL* CONCERN--

MARTIAN MANHUNTER --!!

--AS YOU CAN SEE, DESPERO'S *TRIAL* IS SOMETHING OF A *MESS*. PEOPLE HAVE COME FROM *ALL OVER* THE *GALAXY* TO SEE A *GOOD HANGING*--

--AND WE'D DAMN WELL BETTER *GIVE* 'EM ONE.

THESE GUYS CALLED *TORNADIANS* BROKE IN HERE AND *KIDNAPPED* THE *JUDGE*... *

...IT'S KINDA MY FAULT...

*LAST ISH -- ROO

RAY IS *YOUR* GUY. MAKES THIS *YOUR* RESPONSI-BILITY.

RIOTS HAVE BROKEN OUT ACROSS THE PLANET. EVERYONE'S SCREAMING *COVER-UP*.

IF YOU DON'T GET THE JUDGE BACK, THERE'LL BE *HELL*.

I'LL NEED YOUR HELP. IT'S BEEN *YEARS* SINCE I LAST VISITED XANTHCAR.

SINCE *WE* WERE HERE. YES, I REMEMBER. BUT, CHECK IT--

--*THIS GUY*, DESPERO, L-RON, THE ARTIST FORMERLY KNOWN AS PRINCE-- *WHATEVER*-- IS MY PRIORITY. 80 GRAND WORTH.

AND, J'ONN, YOU *KNOW* I DON'T MESS WITH THE *RENT MONEY*. YOU GUYS ARE ON YOUR *OWN*.

I AM *SCANNING*.

HEY-- *HEY--!!*

KNOCK IT OFF--!!

I AM MERELY SEARCHING THE CAPITOL FOR THE *JUDGE*, GAMMER-ON. J'ONN, CAN YOU *LOCK ON* TO DESPERO'S *TELE-PATHIC PROBE*?

YES, L-RON. I HAVE THE COORDINATES.

VERY WELL, GAMMERON. MY TASK FORCE WILL RECOVER THE JUDGE, SO THAT L-RON MAY BE *VINDICATED* IN A *FAIR TRIAL*-- WHICH IS OUR *AGREEMENT*. BE *WARNED*, HOWEVER--

--I WILL CONSIDER ANY *BREACH* OF THAT AGREEMENT AN ACT OF *WAR*.

--J'ONN-- IT'S *GYPSY*!

EMERGENCY --!!

PAIN.

HITTING HIM LIKE A TAX AUDIT.

FIRST THE PERCUSSIVE FORCE-- THE THRUST OF IT. THEN THE EDGE.

THE WHITE SLIVER DIVIDING AGONY FROM ECSTASY. THE PROFANE FROM THE SACRED.

GOOD FROM EVIL.

IT'S GOT A FACE NOW. THE PAIN.

IT HAS STANLEY COBALT'S FACE--THE MAN WHO BROKE TRIUMPH'S BACK.

CLOSING TIME IS 8809.07.

POINT OH-SEVEN.

FOR WEEKS NOW, TRIUMPH HAS USED HIS POWERS TO MAINTAIN A CONSTANT GRAVITY POCKET AROUND THE AFFECTED VERTEBRAE--

--LESSENING THE PRESSURE. BUT THE XANTHCAN GRAVITY FIELD IS NEARLY TRIPLE THAT OF EARTH.

WILL--!!

WILL--SAY SOMETHING--

THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN USEFUL TO KNOW.

ONE CLICK PAST CLOSING, WE CONFISCATE YOUR VESSEL.

ENJOY THE TRIAL.

J'ONN-- WILL'S IN *SHOCK* OR SOMETHING... I CAN'T TELL WHAT'S *WRONG!!*

AND NONE OF THESE--BUG PEOPLE--WILL HELP--!!

I KNOW WHAT THE PROBLEM IS.

TRIUMPH-- WILL--LISTEN TO ME--

THAT VOICE-- J'ONN.

TRIUMPH HATES J'ONN.

TRIUMPH INTRODUCED J'ONN TO SUPERMAN AND FLASH--GREEN LANTERN. TRIUMPH LED J'ONN ON HIS FIRST TEAM MISSION.

TRIUMPH LED J'ONN,

AND NOW, J'ONN TREATS HIM LIKE A CHILD.

YOU ARE A CHILD,

YOU WERE A CHILD *THEN.* YOUR IMPULSIVE, RECKLESS LEADERSHIP NEARLY CAUSED A *DISASTER.* *

*JLA #92 --Roo

TRIUMPH WAS IMPERFECT-- BUT HE WAS J'ONN'S PEER--

YOU WERE *NEVER* MY "PEER." YOU NEVER *SHALL* BE.

YOUR GREAT LIMITATION IS YOUR OWN MISGUIDED SENSE OF *SELF-IMPORTANCE.*

YOUR SUFFERING NOW IS THE *FRUIT* OF THAT ARROGANCE.

Uh-- J'ONN'S BEDSIDE MANNER COULD USE A LITTLE WORK, Y'THINK--?

Shhh!! WATCH AND LEARN, JUNIOR.

SHUT UP-- SHUT UP--

SHUT ME UP.

WHAAK!

GET MAD.

GET MAD AT *ME.* COME ON, TRIUMPH--

--SNAP OUT OF IT.

ZZZMMM

WHAAAAMM

GOOD. VERY GOOD.

HEY, WILL. NICE TO SEE YOU.

...HI, GYPSY ...BOY, YOU'RE CUTE...

NOT SO BAD-LOOKING YOURSELF--

...WAS TALKING ABOUT THE BOY...

WELL, HAR-DEE-HAR-HAR.

SO, WAS THAT JUST THE *FREAKY AIR*-- OR THE GRAVITY AFFECTING YOUR POWERS--

YES.

ENOUGH. TASK FORCE--

--TIME TO GO TO WORK.

THE STAND
EVERYONE STAY CLOSE.
ACCORDING TO L-RON'S SCANS, THE TORNADIANS BROUGHT THE JUDGE DOWN THIS WORM-HOLE AND VANISHED AMONG THE CATA-COMBS BENEATH THE CITY.
BE READY FOR ANYTHING.

PRIEST ▼ WRITER RAMON**BERNADO** ▼ PENCILLER **BERNADO, WALLACE, & NAPOLITANO** ▼ INKERS
ADRIENNE**ROY** ▼ COLORIST KEVIN**CUNNINGHAM** ▼ LETTERER ALISANDE**MORALES** ▼ ASS'T ED. RUBEN**DIAZ** ▼ EDITOR
COVER BY CHRIS BATISTA & CHIP WALLACE, COLORED AND SEPARATED BY MATT HOLLINGSWORTH

THE *TORNADIANS* ARE AN *IMITATIVE* SPECIES. THEY TEND TO GLORIFY ANY-THING THEY'VE SEEN ON TELEVISION...

SO, LIKE, WE COULD BE DOWN HERE FIGHTING BART SIMPSON--?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

SPEAKING OF SURPRISES--

--I THOUGHT *YOU* WEREN'T COMING?

YEAH, WELL, I CHANGED MY MIND.

ACTUALLY-- SOMEBODY-- CHANGED IT *FOR* ME.*

I STOPPED BY THE JLA REFUGEE AND THAT GOONEY *YAZZ* GAVE ME DI-RECTIONS.

*NAMELY, VANDAL SAVAGE, IN RAY #20--R.

GUESS I *BEAT* YOU HERE BECAUSE I CAN TAKE SHORTCUTS THROUGH *SUNS* AND *BLACK HOLES*--

--AND, SPEAKING OF WHICH--

THE WORMHOLE DIVIDES HERE. ONE TUNNEL WILL LEAD TO THE *TORNADIANS*. ONE IS A DEAD END.

ONE LEADS TO THE CREATURE THAT *CREATED* THIS WORMHOLE.

RAY, YOU TAKE THE LEFT, TRIUMPH THE RIGHT, GYPSY WITH *ME*.

ACTUALLY, J'ONN, IF IT'S OKAY WITH YOU--

--I'D RATHER RIDE WITH *TRIUMPH*.

WHAT--?

DO I NEED A *MINT*--?

WILL SAVED MY *LIFE*--.

--AND I JUST HELPED SAVE *HIS*. WE'RE *BONDING*.

GROSS.

NOW THAT WE'RE ALL *COMFORT-ABLE*--

--LET'S GET TO WORK.

SO, GYPSY, HERE WE ARE, BEING *WEIRD.*

EXCUSE ME?

YOU'RE LIGHTING THE WAY WITH THE *ENERGY BATON* L-RON CREATED FOR YOU--YOU'VE COME CLEAR ACROSS THE GALAXY, RISKED YOUR *LIFE,* JUST TO HELP *DEFEND* HIM--

--THIS GUY YOU *CAN'T STAND.*

DESPERO KILLED MY PARENTS, WILL.

L-RON IS JUST *STUCK* IN DESPERO'S BODY. THAT WAS A DISTINCTION I COULDN'T MAKE UNTIL RECENTLY.

I *DON'T* ACCEPT DESPERO-- BUT I *CAN'T* ABANDON L-RON.

BUT, HEY, LOOK AT *YOU*-- CRAWLING BACK TO THE TEAM AFTER J'ONN THREW YOU OUT. *

I'M *NOT* "BACK," GYPSY.

J'ONN SENT OUT A *GENERAL ALERT* AND I ANSWERED IT.**

L-RON IS *MY* FRIEND, TOO, WHEN THIS IS OVER, I'M *GONE.*

YA-HUM.

*SEE TASK FORCE *#28 AND **#30--RCO0*

OKAY, KIDS--

--END OF THE *ROAD.*

NO JUDGE--NO *MONSTER*--

--GUESS J'ONN AND RAY GET TO HAVE ALL THE FUN...

THIS JUST IN:

EITHER PECO HAS A *REALLY* LONG PIPELINE--*

*PHILADELPHIA ELECTRIC COMPANY-- Roo

--OR E.T. HAS COME HOME.

VIDEO MONITORS-- WITH BROADCASTS FROM ALL OVER THE *GALAXY*! MAN, THESE TORNADIANS ARE THE *ULTIMATE* COUCH POTATOES.

WONDER IF THEY GET *MELROSE PLACE*--?

HMMM... LET'S SEE... BIG CHAIR... BODYGUARDS... EXTRA TV'S--

--*MUST* BE THE GUY.

HEY, YOUR WORSHIP-FULNESS--

--'SUP?

I'M *RAY TERRILL*, FROM PHILLY. DON'T KNOW IF YOU GET CHANNEL 3 OUT HERE-- Y'KNOW--LARRY KANE--?

--HELLO --?

OKAY-- CHECK THIS OUT--

OKAY, I JUST TOOK OUT YOUR BIG TUFF GUY. I CAN DO THAT ALL DAY LONG.

SSZZHKT

IT'S A GIFT.

SO WHY NOT HAND OVER THE JUDGE, AND I'LL LET YOU GET BACK TO *BAYWATCH*.

HEAR THAT?

YEAH-- SOUNDS LIKE RAY FOUND THE PARTY.

MAYBE WE'D BETTER--

--SCREAM LIKE LITTLE GIRLS--

KRAK

MEANWHILE...

Uh-Oh, GUYS--LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GONNA MISS OPRAH.

P! P! P!

KILL HIM!

HEARD IT.

LOOK'ERE HOMES--

YEAH, YEAH--"DEATH TO THE VILE USURPER FROM THE SURFACE WORLD!"

--WHAT SAY I KILL YOU INSTEAD?

YOU PICK THE TUNE. "I SHOT THE SHERIFF" OR "HERE COME DE JUDGE."

MOMENTS LATER...

HOPE THESE GOOFY COMMUNICATORS WORK DOWN HERE--

BREAKER BREAKER ONE-NINE--YOU GOOD BUDDIES GOT'CHA EARS ON--?

RAY-- GET OUT.

HEY, RELAX, J'ONN-- I GOT JUDGE OTI, HERE--

--HEY--!

MY-- AREN'T WE IN A SNIT--

DON'T SAY IT, RAY --JUST LET IT GO--!!

YUCK--!

Oh-- GROSS --!!

WWWARRRRRRR

THE COURT HOUSE...

WELL, THAT'S IT.

YOUR PALS ARE *LATE*. LOOKS LIKE THE TRIAL'S A *BUST*.

REASONABLE DOUBT ALL OVER THE PLACE.

WE *COULD* BIND YOU OVER FOR A NEW TRIAL--

--BUT THE *NUTS* WOULD *BURN* XANTH-CAR DOWN LONG BEFORE WE GOT TO IT.

NO, MY FRIEND, I THINK YOU'RE IN *BIG TROUBLE*. NOT MY PLACE TO SAY--

--BUT I DON'T THINK THESE FOLKS ARE GONNA *WAIT* FOR A *VERDICT*--

"GGHMNAAAHHH..!!

--THOUGHT I PATCHED THAT DAMNED EYE--

SO, WHAT YOU'RE *SAYING*, GAMMERON, IS *NO MATTER WHAT*--

--I AM ABOUT TO DIE.

YEAH, YEAH-- THAT'S ABOUT RIGHT.

Oh YEAH-- I REMEMBER THIS PLACE--YOUR LITTLE VIRTUAL REALITY RUMPUS ROOM--

SHUT UP.

KERRACK

I'M A CONDEMNED MAN, GAMMERON.

MAKES ME DANGEROUS.

POW!

YOU DON'T CARE, L-RON, DESPERO--YOU SAID I'M ONLY A PAYCHECK.

WELL, GAMMERON-- I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU CARE.

YOU MAY NOT KNOW HOW IT FEELS TO WEAR CONDEMNED SKIN--

--BUT YOU'RE ABOUT TO FIND OUT.

KILL HIM.

NO-- WAIT--

--I'M NOT HIM--I MEAN--HE'S SWITCHED--

--I DIDN'T DO IT--

STOP --!!

YEEEARRGH!

--YAAAAHHH--!!

--WHA--?

Oh.

OKAY, L-RON--I GET IT.

--YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT.

THERE HE IS--!!

KILL THE KALADORAN!

DEATH!

DIE!!

TEE SHIRTS! GET YA TEE SHIRTS--!!

KILL HIM!

ALL RIGHT-- NOW EVERYBODY STAY GROOVY--!

RRAAAWWWLL!

--DON'T WANT NOBODY TO GET WASTED HERE--!!

WHO'S NEXT?

I DIDN'T THINK SO.

SOON...

GET YOUR HAND OFF MY LEG, YOU OLD BAT.

WOW--WHAT HAPPENED--? WHERE IS EVERYBODY --?!

SOMETHING-- OR SOMEONE-- HAS CLEARED THE STREET, THIS CAN'T BE GOOD.

WELL, WELL--

--LOOK WHAT THE CAT COUGHED UP.

SAVE IT, RAY, OKAY?

:UNGHNN--!:

YOUR PAL L-DESPERO JUST COST ME 80,000 CREDITS.

L-RON-- ESCAPED --?

ALL RIGHT FOR THE LITTLE GUY!

"ESCAPED"--?

WHY DON'T I *BELIEVE* YOU, GLENN?

WHY DOES THAT SOUND LIKE A *LIE*?

HEY-- J'ONN--IT'S ALL GROOVY, MAN--

WHY DO I SMELL A *RAT*?

HEY-- *YOU'RE* THE MIND READER, J'ONN.

THAT I AM.

HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH. L-RON IS *ALIVE*--AND HAS *ESCAPED*.

HIS DESTINATION IS *UNKNOWN*.

Uh-- SPEAKING OF *ESCAPES*--

--MAYBE WE'D BETTER MAKE *OURS*!!

KILL THEM!!

KILL THEM *ALL*!!

BUT WHY--? WE'RE SUCH NICE PEOPLE!

AND HEY-- I THOUGHT GAMMERON WORKED FOR THEM--?

B-RRRAM

WHY DO YOU THINK, BEAVIS--?

--BECAUSE GAMMERON LET L-RON GO.

GAMMERON TOOK A DIVE AND THEY'RE PRETTY TICKED ABOUT IT.

YEAH, YEAH, YEAH.

I'M A PIP.

YOU YOU PEOPLE OWE ME 80 GRAND.

FOR NOW, THOUGH, I'LL SETTLE FOR GETTING OUT ALIVE.

WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT TO MY SHIP-- WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE YOURS.

WE'RE AT THE PARKING DECK-- LEVEL 19--!

--HEY--!

WHERE'S OUR SHIP?!

YOU'RE LATE.

I TOLD YOU-- ONE CLICK PAST .07 AND WE TOW THE SHIP.

OUR LITTLE WAY OF SAYING "TOURISTS SUCK."

MISTER, EITHER YOU RETURN OUR SHIP--

--OR YOU'RE IN FOR ONE HELL OF A HEADACHE.

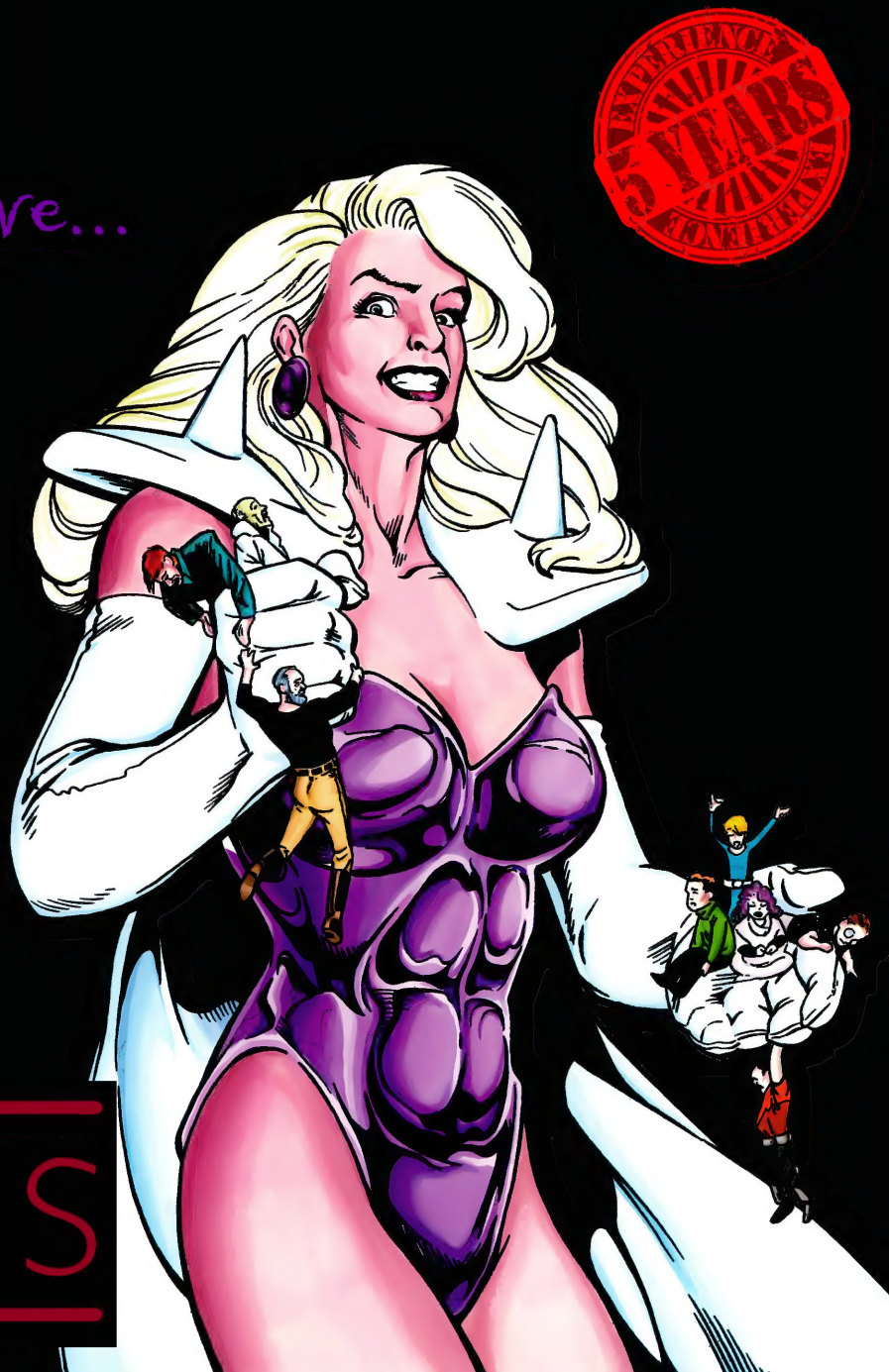
THAT'S IT. FRIGHTEN ME.

HATE TO BRING THIS UP, PEOPLE, BUT--

--WE'RE TRAPPED!!!

NEXT: DOOMED

From Baaldur, with love...



GLORITH

novus